# Group-Theoretical Classification of BPS States in D=4 Conformal Supersymmetry: the Case of $\frac{1}{N}$ -BPS <sup>1</sup>

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#### **Abstract**

In an earlier paper we gave the complete group-theoretical classification of BPS states of the N-extended D=4 conformal superalgebras su(2,2/N), but not all interesting cases were given in detail. In the present paper we spell out the interesting case of  $\frac{1}{N}$ -BPS and possibly protected states.

## 1 Introduction

Recently, superconformal field theories in various dimensions are attracting more interest, especially in view of their applications in string theory. Thus, the classification of the UIRs of the conformal superalgebras is of great importance. For some time such classification was known only for the D=4 superconformal algebras su(2,2/1) [1] and su(2,2/N) for arbitrary N [2], (see also [3,4]). Then, more progress was made with the classification for D=3 (for even N), D=5, and D=6 (for N=1,2) in [5] (some results being conjectural), then for the D=6 case (for arbitrary N) was finalized in [6]. Finally, the cases D=9,10,11 were treated by finding the UIRs of osp(1/2n), [7].

After we have know the UIRs the next problem to address is to find their characters since these give the spectrum which is important for the applications. This was done for the UIRs of D=4 conformal superalgebras su(2,2/N) in [8]. From the mathematical point of view this question is clear only for representations with conformal dimension above the unitarity threshold viewed as irreps of the corresponding complex superalgebra sl(4/N). But for su(2,2/N) even the UIRs above the unitarity threshold are truncated for small values of spin and isospin. More than that, in the applications the most important role is played by the representations with "quantized" conformal dimensions at the unitarity threshold and at discrete points below. In the quantum field or string theory framework some of these correspond to operators with "protected" scaling dimension and therefore imply "non-renormalization theorems" at the quantum level, cf., e.g., [9, 10]. Especially important in this context are the so-called BPS states, cf., [10–16, 18].

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These investigations requires deeper knowledge of the structure of the UIRs. Fortunately, most of the needed information is contained in [2–4, 19]. We use also more explicit results on the decompositions of long superfields as they descend to the unitarity threshold [8].

In the paper [20] we gave the complete group-theoretical classification of the BPS states, but not all interesting cases were given in detail. In the present paper motivated by the paper [21] we spell out the interesting case of  $\frac{1}{N}$ -BPS states.

## 2 Preliminaries

#### 2.1 Representations of D=4 conformal supersymmetry

The conformal superalgebras in D=4 are  $\mathcal{G}=su(2,2/N)$ . The even subalgebra of  $\mathcal{G}$  is the algebra  $\mathcal{G}_0=su(2,2)\oplus u(1)\oplus su(N)$ . We label their physically relevant representations of  $\mathcal{G}$  by the signature:

$$\chi = [d; j_1, j_2; z; r_1, \dots, r_{N-1}]$$
(2.1)

where d is the conformal weight,  $j_1, j_2$  are non-negative (half-)integers which are Dynkin labels of the finite-dimensional irreps of the D=4 Lorentz subalgebra so(3,1) of dimension  $(2j_1+1)(2j_2+1)$ , z represents the u(1) subalgebra which is central for  $\mathcal{G}_0$  (and is central for  $\mathcal{G}$  itself when N=4), and  $r_1, \ldots, r_{N-1}$  are non-negative integers which are Dynkin labels of the finite-dimensional irreps of the internal (or R) symmetry algebra su(N).

We recall the root system of the complexification  $\mathcal{G}^{\mathcal{C}}$  of  $\mathcal{G}$  (as used in [4]). The positive root system  $\Delta^+$  is comprised of  $\alpha_{ij}$ ,  $1 \leq i < j \leq 4 + N$ . The even positive root system  $\Delta^+_{\bar{0}}$  is comprised of  $\alpha_{ij}$ , with  $i, j \leq 4$  and  $i, j \geq 5$ ; the odd positive root system  $\Delta^+_{\bar{1}}$  is comprised of  $\alpha_{ij}$ , with  $i \leq 4, j \geq 5$ . The generators corresponding to the latter (odd) roots will be denoted as  $X^+_{i,4+k}$ , where  $i = 1, 2, 3, 4, k = 1, \ldots, N$ .

We use lowest weight Verma modules  $V^{\Lambda}$  over  $\mathcal{G}^{\mathcal{C}}$ , where the lowest weight  $\Lambda$  is characterized by its values on the Cartan subalgebra  $\mathcal{H}$  and is in 1-to-1 correspondence with the signature  $\chi$ . If a Verma module  $V^{\Lambda}$  is irreducible then it gives the lowest weight irrep  $L_{\Lambda}$  with the same weight. If a Verma module  $V^{\Lambda}$  is reducible then it contains a maximal invariant submodule  $I^{\Lambda}$  and the lowest weight irrep  $L_{\Lambda}$  with the same weight is given by factorization:  $L_{\Lambda} = V^{\Lambda} / I^{\Lambda}$  [22].

There are submodules which are generated by the singular vectors related to the even simple roots [4]. These generate an even invariant submodule  $I_c^{\Lambda}$  present in all Verma modules that we consider and which must be factored out. Thus, instead of  $V^{\Lambda}$  we shall consider the factor-modules:

$$\tilde{V}^{\Lambda} = V^{\Lambda} / I_c^{\Lambda} \tag{2.2}$$

The Verma module reducibility conditions for the 4N odd positive roots of  $\mathcal{G}^{\mathcal{C}}$  were derived in [3,4] adapting the results of Kac [22]:

$$d = d_{Nk}^{1} - z\delta_{N4}$$

$$d_{Nk}^{1} \equiv 4 - 2k + 2j_{2} + z + 2m_{k} - 2m/N$$
(2.3a)

$$d = d_{Nk}^2 - z\delta_{N4}$$

$$d_{Nk}^2 \equiv 2 - 2k - 2j_2 + z + 2m_k - 2m/N$$
(2.3b)

$$d = d_{Nk}^{3} + z\delta_{N4}$$

$$d_{Nk}^{3} \equiv 2 + 2k - 2N + 2j_{1} - z - 2m_{k} + 2m/N$$
(2.3c)

$$d = d_{Nk}^4 + z\delta_{N4}$$

$$d_{Nk}^4 \equiv 2k - 2N - 2j_1 - z - 2m_k + 2m/N$$
(2.3d)

where in all four cases of (2.3)  $k = 1, ..., N, m_N \equiv 0$ , and

$$m_k \equiv \sum_{i=k}^{N-1} r_i , \quad m \equiv \sum_{k=1}^{N-1} m_k = \sum_{k=1}^{N-1} k r_k$$
 (2.4)

Note that we shall use also the quantity  $m^*$  which is conjugate to m:

$$m^* \equiv \sum_{k=1}^{N-1} k r_{N-k} = \sum_{k=1}^{N-1} (N-k) r_k ,$$
 (2.5)

$$m + m^* = Nm_1 {.} {(2.6)}$$

We need the result of [2] (cf. part (i) of the Theorem there) that the following is the complete list of lowest weight (positive energy) UIRs of su(2, 2/N):

$$d \ge d_{\text{max}} = \max(d_{N1}^1, d_{NN}^3) , \qquad (2.7a)$$

$$d = d_{NN}^4 \ge d_{N1}^1 , \quad j_1 = 0 ,$$
 (2.7b)

$$d = d_{N1}^2 \ge d_{NN}^3 , \quad j_2 = 0 ,$$
 (2.7c)

$$d = d_{N1}^2 = d_{NN}^4 , \quad j_1 = j_2 = 0 ,$$
 (2.7d)

where  $d_{\text{max}}$  is the threshold of the continuous unitary spectrum. Note that in case (d) we have  $d = m_1$ ,  $z = 2m/N - m_1$ , and that it is trivial for N = 1.

Next we note that if  $d > d_{\text{max}}$  the factorized Verma modules are irreducible and coincide with the UIRs  $L_{\Lambda}$ . These UIRs are called **long** in the modern literature, cf., e.g., [10, 18, 23–27]. Analogously, we shall use for the cases when  $d = d_{\text{max}}$ , i.e., (2.7a), the terminology of **semi-short** UIRs, introduced in [10, 23], while the cases (2.7b,c,d) are also called **short** UIRs, cf., e.g., [10, 18, 24–27].

Next consider in more detail the UIRs at the four distinguished reducibility points determining the UIRs list above:  $d_{N1}^1$ ,  $d_{N1}^2$ ,  $d_{NN}^3$ ,  $d_{NN}^4$ . We note a partial ordering of these four points:

$$d_{N1}^1 > d_{N1}^2 , \qquad d_{NN}^3 > d_{NN}^4 .$$
 (2.8)

Due to this ordering at most two of these four points may coincide.

First we consider the situations in which *no two* of the distinguished four points coincide. There are four such situations:

**a**: 
$$d = d_{\text{max}} = d_{N1}^1 = d^a \equiv 2 + 2j_2 + z + 2m_1 - 2m/N > d_{NN}^3$$
 (2.9a)

**b**: 
$$d = d_{N1}^2 = d^b \equiv z - 2j_2 + 2m_1 - 2m/N > d_{NN}^3$$
,  $j_2 = 0$  (2.9b)

$$\mathbf{c}: d = d_{\text{max}} = d_{NN}^3 = d^c \equiv 2 + 2j_1 - z + 2m/N > d_{N1}^1$$
 (2.9c)

$$\mathbf{d}: \qquad d = d_{NN}^4 = d^d \equiv 2m/N - 2j_1 - z > d_{N1}^1 , \quad j_1 = 0$$
 (2.9d)

where for future use we have introduced notations  $d^a, d^b, d^c, d^d$ , the definitions including also the corresponding inequality.

We shall call these cases **single-reducibility-condition (SRC)** Verma modules or UIRs, depending on the context. In addition, as already stated, we use for the cases when  $d = d_{\text{max}}$ , i.e., (2.9a,c), the terminology of semi-short UIRs, while the cases (2.9b,d), are also called short UIRs.

The factorized Verma modules  $\tilde{V}^{\Lambda}$  with the unitary signatures from (2.9) have only one invariant odd submodule which has to be factorized in order to obtain the UIRs.

We consider now the four situations in which two distinguished points coincide:

ac: 
$$d = d_{\text{max}} = d^{ac} \equiv 2 + j_1 + j_2 + m_1 = d_{N1}^1 = d_{NN}^3$$
 (2.10a)

$$ad: d = d^{ad} \equiv 1 + j_2 + m_1 = d^1_{N1} = d^4_{NN}, \quad j_1 = 0$$
 (2.10b)

**bc**: 
$$d = d^{bc} \equiv 1 + j_1 + m_1 = d_{N1}^2 = d_{NN}^3, \quad j_2 = 0$$
 (2.10c)

**bd**: 
$$d = d^{bd} \equiv m_1 = d_{N1}^2 = d_{NN}^4$$
,  $j_1 = j_2 = 0$  (2.10d)

We shall call these **double-reducibility-condition (DRC)** Verma modules or UIRs. The cases in (2.10a) are semi-short UIR, while the other cases are short.

# 3 BPS and possibly protected states

BPS states are characterized by the number  $\kappa$  of odd generators which annihilate them - then the corresponding state is called  $\frac{\kappa}{4N}$ -BPS state. The most interesting case for BPS states is when N=4 since is related to super-Yang-Mills, cf., [10–18]. Also group-theoretically the case N=4 is special since the u(1) subalgebra carrying the quantum number z becomes central and one can invariantly set z=0. When  $N\neq 4$  we can also set z=0 though this does not have the same group-theoretical meaning as for N=4.

In the paper [20] we gave the complete classification of the BPS states, but not all interesting cases were given in detail. In the present paper motivated by the paper [21] we spell out the interesting case of  $\frac{1}{N}$ -BPS states, i.e., the cases when  $\kappa = 4$ .

It is convenient to consider the case of general N while treating separately R-symmetry scalars and R-symmetry non-scalars.

# 3.1 R-symmetry scalars

We start with the simpler cases of R-symmetry scalars when  $r_i = 0$  for all i, which means also that  $m_1 = m = m^* = 0$ .

These cases are valid also for N=1, however for N=1 in all cases we have  $\kappa < 4$ , [20]. In fact only three cases are relevant for  $\kappa = 4$ .

•a  $d = (d_{N1}^1)_{|_{m=0=z}} = 2 + 2j_2 > 2 + 2j_1 = (d_{NN}^3)_{|_{m=0=z}}$ . The last inequality leads to the restriction:  $j_2 > j_1$ , i.e.,  $j_2 > 0$ , and then we have:

$$\kappa = N, \quad m_1 = m = 0, \quad j_2 > 0.$$
(3.1)

These semi-short UIRs may be called semi-chiral since they lack half of the anti-chiral generators:  $X_{3,4+k}^+, \ k=1,\ldots,N$ . •c  $d=(d_{NN}^3)_{|_{m=0=z}}=2+2j_1>=(d_{N1}^1)_{|_{m=0=z}}\Longrightarrow$ 

•c 
$$d = (d_{NN}^3)_{|_{m=0=z}} = 2 + 2j_1 > = (d_{N1}^1)_{|_{m=0=z}} \Longrightarrow$$

$$\kappa = N, \quad m_1 = m = 0, \ j_1 > 0. \tag{3.2}$$

These semi-short UIRs may be called semi-anti-chiral since they lack half of the chiral generators:  $X_{1,4+k}^+$ ,  $k=1,\ldots,N$ .

Thus, in both cases above the interesting case  $\kappa = 4$  occurs only for N = 4, as  $\frac{1}{4}$ -BPS.

$$\begin{array}{lll} \bullet \ \mathbf{ac} & d = d^{ac}_{|_{m=0}} = 2 + j_1 + j_2 \;, \quad z = j_1 - j_2 \;, \\ & \kappa = 2N, \ \mathrm{if} \quad j_1, j_2 > 0, \\ & \kappa = N+1, \ \mathrm{if} \quad j_1 > 0, \ j_2 = 0, \\ & \kappa = N+1, \ \mathrm{if} \quad j_1 = 0, \ j_2 > 0, \\ & \kappa = 2, \ \mathrm{if} \quad j_1 = j_2 = 0. \end{array}$$

Here,  $\kappa$  is the number of mixed elimination: chiral generators  $X_{1,4+k}^+$ ,  $(k=1,\ldots,N+(1-N)\delta_{j_1,0})$ , and anti-chiral generators  $X_{3,5+N-k}^+$ ,  $(k=1,\ldots,N+(1-N)\delta_{j_2,0})$ . Thus, in the cases when  $\kappa=2N$  the semi-short UIRs may be called semi-chiral-anti-chiral since they lack half of the chiral and half of the anti-chiral generators.

The interesting case  $\kappa = 4$  occurs only for N = 2, as  $\frac{1}{2}$ -BPS.

#### 3.2 R-symmetry non-scalars

Below we need some additional notation. Let N > 1 and let  $i_0$  be an integer such that  $0 \le i_0 \le N - 1$ ,  $r_i = 0$  for  $i \le i_0$ , and if  $i_0 < N - 1$  then  $r_{i_0+1} > 0$ . Let now  $i'_0$  be an integer such that  $0 \le i'_0 \le N - 1$ ,  $r_{N-i} = 0$  for  $i \le i'_0$ , and if  $i'_0 < N - 1$  then  $r_{N-1-i'_0} > 0$ .

The interesting cases of  $\frac{1}{N}$ -BPS states, i.e., when  $\kappa = 4$ , are given in the following list:

• **a** 
$$d = d^a = 2 + 2j_2 + 2m^*/N, \quad N \ge 5,$$
 (3.3)  
 $j_1$  arbitrary,  $j_2 > 0, \quad i_0 = 3, \quad 0 \le i'_0 \le N - 5,$   
 $j_2 > j_1 + \sum_{k=4}^{N-1} (2k/N - 1)r_k$ .

Here are eliminated four anti-chiral generators  $X_{3,4+k}^+$ ,  $k \le 4$ .

• **b** 
$$d = d^b = 2m^*/N, \quad N \ge 5,$$
 (3.4)  
 $j_2 = 0, \quad j_1 \text{ arbitrary}, \quad i_0 = 1, \quad 0 \le i'_0 \le N - 3,$ 

$$\sum_{k=2}^{[(N-1)/2]} (1 - 2k/N) r_k > j_1 + \sum_{[(N+1)/2]}^{N-1} (2k/N - 1) r_k .$$

Here are eliminated four anti-chiral generators  $\ X_{3,5+N-k}^+\,,\ X_{4,5+N-k}^+\,,\ k\leq 2\,.$ 

• **c** 
$$d = d^{c} = 2 + 2j_{1} + 2m/N, \quad N \geq 5,$$
 (3.5)  
 $j_{1} > 0, \quad j_{2} \text{ arbitrary}, \quad i'_{0} = 3, \quad 0 \leq i_{0} \leq N - 5,$   
 $j_{1} > j_{2} + \sum_{k=1}^{N-4} (1 - 2k/N)r_{k}.$ 

Here are eliminated four chiral generators  $X_{1,4+k}^+$ ,  $k \le 4$ .

• **d** 
$$d = d^d = 2m/N, \quad N \ge 5,$$
 (3.6)  
 $j_1 = 0, \quad j_2 \text{ arbitrary}, \quad i'_0 = 1, \quad 0 \le i_0 \le N - 3,$ 

$$\sum_{k=1}^{[(N-1)/2]} (1 - 2k/N) r_k > j_2 + \sum_{[(N+1)/2]}^{N-4} (2k/N - 1) r_k .$$

Here are eliminated four chiral generators  $X_{1,4+k}^+$ ,  $X_{2,4+k}^+$ ,  $k \le 2$ .

• ac 
$$d = d^{ac} = 2 + j_1 + j_2 + m_1$$
,  $N \ge 4$ ,  
 $j_1 + m/N = j_2 + m^*/N$ ,  
 $j_1 j_2 > 0$ ,  $i_0 + i'_0 = 2$ , (3.7a)  
 $j_1 > 0$ ,  $j_2 = 0$ ,  $i_0 = 0$ ,  $i'_0 = 2$ , (3.7b)  
 $j_1 = 0$ ,  $j_2 > 0$ ,  $i_0 = 2$ ,  $i'_0 = 0$ .

Here are eliminated four generators: chiral generators  $X_{1,4+k}^+$ ,  $k \leq 1 + i'_0(1 - \delta_{j_1,0})$ , and anti-chiral generators  $X_{3,5+N-k}^+$ ,  $k \leq 1 + i_0(1 - \delta_{j_2,0})$ .

• ad 
$$d = d^{ad} = 1 + j_2 + m_1 = 2m/N$$
,  $N \ge 3$ , (3.8)  $j_1 = 0$ ,  $j_2 > 0$ ,  $i_0 = 1$ ,  $i'_0 = 0$ .

Here are eliminated two chiral generators  $X_{1,5}^+$ ,  $X_{2,5}^+$ , and two anti-chiral generators  $X_{3,5+N-k}^+$ , k=1,2.

• **bc** 
$$d = d^{bc} = 1 + j_1 + m_1 = 2m^*/N$$
,  $N \ge 3$ ,  $j_2 = 0$ ,  $j_1 > 0$ ,  $i_0 = 0$ ,  $i'_0 = 1$ .

Here are eliminated two chiral generators  $X_{1,4+k}^+$ , k=1,2, and two anti-chiral generators  $X_{3,8}^+$ ,  $X_{4,8}^+$ .

• **bd** 
$$d = d^{bd} = m_1, N \ge 2,$$
 (3.10)  
 $j_1 = j_2 = 0, i_0 = i'_0 = 0.$ 

Here are eliminated two chiral generators  $X_{1,5}^+$ ,  $X_{2,5}^+$ , and two anti-chiral generators  $X_{3,8}^+$ ,  $X_{4,8}^+$ .

Note that according to the results of [20] the following cases would not be protected: **ad** for  $r_{N-1} > 2$ , **bc** for  $r_1 > 2$ , **bd** for  $r_1, r_{N-1} > 2$  when N > 2, and for  $r_1 > 4$  when N = 2.

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